THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The Government has fixed the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of kharif crops of 2006-07 season, including bajra on 27th July, 2006. The MSP of other agri-products of Rabi-2006-07 season have also been fixed on 27th & 30th October, 2006. The MSP so fixed are uniform for all the states including Rajasthan. In view of this, currently there is no other proposal under consideration to revise the prices of bajra and other products.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Reducing cost of Sunflower seeds

244. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sunflower seeds producing companies are selling their products at Rs. 500 to 600 per 2 kg. packets based on their brand names;

(b) if so, the estimated cost of producing the seeds and profit margins enjoyed by the manufacturers;

(c) the methodology adopted for fixing prices and the authority which is fixing prices of all hybrid variety seeds; and

(d) whether there is any proposal by Government to reduce the cost of sunflower seeds and other hybrid seeds to mitigate the problems of farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The sale price of public bred Sunflower hybrid seeds ranges from Rs. 110 to 210 per kg. Main suppliers in public sector are National Seeds Corporation and Maharashtra and Karnataka State Seed Corporations. Private Sector Companies are selling Sunflower hybrid seeds at prices ranging between Rs. 290 to 300 per kg. The approximate cost of producing hybrid sunflower seed is Rs. 80 to 100 per kg. The sale price of hybrid seeds is determined by many factors like cost involved in production, processing, treatment, packing, handling, transportation, storage, quality of seeds, availability and demand of seeds. To mitigate the problems of farmers Government provides seed distribution subsidy @ Rs. 25 per kg. for hybrid Rice Seed, Rs. 10 per kg. for hybrid Jowar and hybrid Bajra Seed, Rs. 8 per kg. for hybrid Maize Seed and hybid

sunflower seed through different crop development programmes. Further, Research is in progress to fine tune the hybrid seed production technology.

Suicides vis-a-vis loans from private money lenders

245. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the reports of continuous farmers' suicides from various States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the loan with exorbitant interest rates taken from the private money lenders is one of the major causes for the distress of farmers;

(d) if so, whether Government have taken any measure to protect the farmers who are indebted to the money lenders;

(e) whether Government would declare the debts taken from the money lenders as illegal; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The details of suicides by farmers because of agriculture-related reasons as reported by the State Governments since the year 2003, are given in the statement.

[Refer to the Statement appended to the Answer to Starred Question No. 51 (a) and (b)]

(c) and (d) Indebtness due to high rate of interest loans is one of the main reasons attributed by the State Governments for the distress of farmers. A comprehensive credit policy was announced by the Government on 18th June, 2004 containing measures for doubling of agricultural credit flow in next three years and provision of debt relief to the farmers. This, *inter alia* alloweed banks to finance for redeeming the loans taken by farmers from private money lenders. In the Union Budget for the year 2006-07, it was announced that effective from Kharif 2006-07, farmers would receive crop loans upto a principal amount of Rs. 3 lakh at 7% rate of interest.

(e) and (f) No such proposal is under consideration of the Government.